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March 7, 1962

Mr. John A. McCone
Director, Central Intelligence Agency
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. McCone:

Analyzing the CIA official report on Powers together with his testimony (both in the N.Y. Herald Tribune today), I have been struck by the possibility that the Russians have developed a means of creating a high-altitude electrical explosion which would account for the "push" to the plane and the orange flash.

The planes Mr. Powers saw parallel to his course may have enabled them, travelling in opposite directions, to "fix" his height and speed, and with radar watching his course two other planes or defense points near Sverdlovsk just might have been able to transmit simultaneous "negative" and "positive" charges to meet at the apex of a triangle behind the plane. Such a thing would affect the pilot and his controls and bring the plane down.

If this seems silly, remember that the Russians are said to have been avid readers of "Popular Science" and Science Fiction magazines. I think we would do well to research these magazines carefully to check whatever "outlandish" ideas they might use. I think also that we should have scientists research some of the technical publications that the Government makes available for the asking. I was astonished to see a recent list of such items that came to the editorial office where I work (Paper & Paper Products.) I supposed they are ~~not~~ considered not "critical" but their distribution to unqualified people could spark ideas for the Russians that we completely miss. In fact I feel certain that so long as Russia can drain from us in one way or another ideas to their advantage they do not want a war.

Another thing: when we think of a rocket capable of rising 68,000 ft., as they seem to want us to believe they have, we think of huge installations. But in following through on my idea about electricity I was reminded of the Leyden jar principle and condensers -- and I "read up" on them in my old Encyclopedia Britannica. I was intrigued by the fact that paper, parafin, oil, thin sheets of aluminum foil or tin are sometimes components and I wondered what would happen if small condensers carrying static electricity were fired from airplanes at 30,000 ft. to meet at 68,000 feet in rare, dry atmosphere -- would they not explode with a flash? If the Russians could hit the moon, they might do that.

I trust there is an idea here worth following through. I'm moved to send it because I have been of service before by sending suggestions. When President Roosevelt asked for ideas at the time England needed ships, I wired him "LEND ENGLAND SHIPS NOW ARRANGE PAYMENT LATER." One week later he announced "LEND-LEASE":

Very truly yours,

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/s/ [REDACTED]